

Message Text

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ACTION EB-03

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 ARA-06 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00

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R 111242Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7255
INFO AMCONSUL CURACAO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0065

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EWWT, ETRD, ESTC, TD, CU

SUBJ: TRINIDAD SHIPYARD RECEIVES CUBAN OVERTURES

1. THE SWAN-HUNTER (TRINIDAD) LTD. SHIPYARD LOCATED ON THE CHAGUARAMUS PENINSULA WEST OF PORT OF SPAIN HAS RECEIVED APPARENTLY SERIOUS INQUIRIES FROM CUBA'S NATIONAL SHIPPING LINE SEEKING A CONTRACT FOR WORK ON CUBAN MERCHANTMEN. THE CUBAN OVERTURE LINDICATED THAT WORK NOW BEING PERFORMED IN CURACAO SHIPYARDS WOULD BE SHIFTED TO TRINIDAD BECAUSE OF THE HIGH COST OF THE CURACAO YARD.

2. FOLLOWING THE CUBAN OVERTURE, THE SWAN-HUNTER MANAGER (HERBERT) CONTACTED THE BRITISH HIGH COMISSION HERE AND ASKED THAT THE HIGHCOM DISCREETLY INQUIRE OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WHETHER THE YARD WOULD INCUR ANY WRATH OR PENALTIES FROM THE USG IF IT WERE TO CONTRACT FOR WORK ON CUBAN SHIPPIING. IN TURN, THE ACTING BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER HAS PASSED QUESTION TO DCM, WITH REQUEST THAT DIALOGUE REMAIN DISCREETLY HELD.

3. WHILE WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY PROBLEM WHICH WOULD BE CREATED FOR SWAN HUNTER BY ACCEPTANCE OF CUBAN BUSINESS, WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT'S RESPONSE TO THIS POIINT.

4. SWAN-HUNTER TRINIDAD IS A WHOLLY-OWNED SUBSIDIARY
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OF SWAN-HUNTER OF THE UK. THE TRINIDAD SHIPYARD HAS BEEN LOSING

MONEY FOR SEVERAL YEARS EXCEPT FOR 1974, WHICH WAS PROFITABLE.
IT IS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY DEPENDENT ON AD HOC DECISIONS OF
SHIPPING IN THE AREA TO HAVE WORK DONE AND THERE ARE NO
LONG-TERM REGULAR CUSTOMERS. 1974 WAS PROFITABLE MOSTLY DUE TO
THE OCCURENCE OF A NUMBER OF SHIPPING ACCIDENTS IN THE AREA.
UK NAVAL VESSELS OCCASIONALLY USE THE YARD, AS HAVE EVERYTHING
FROM SOVIT FREIGHTERS TO PRIVATE AMERICAN YACHTS.

5. COMMENT: IF CUBA IS SEEKING TO MOVE REPAIR ARRANGEMENTS
EASTWARD FROM CURACAO MORE THAN JUST PRICE MAY BE AT STAKE.
IT MAY WELL INDICATE A GENERAL EXPECTATION OF GREATER CUBAN
SHIPPING ACTIVITY IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN (E.G. TIMBER
FROM GUYANA) AND AN EFFORT TO BUILD GREATER TRADE IN THIS AREA.
MILLER

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